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**CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE**

23 August 1961

SUBJECT: THE ARMED COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Communist guerrilla movement in the Philippines originated during World War II as part of the resistance effort against the Japanese. Communist controlled units--the Hukbalahap or People's Anti-Japanese Forces--were operative by mid-1942, and efforts made to organize peasants and establish administrative control in scattered areas of central Luzon. With the liberation of the Philippines, some units of the Huk forces submitted to Philippine government authority, but a sizeable hard core refused to surrender its arms and retained base strongholds in mountainous areas of central Luzon.

During the period of early Philippine independence from 1946 to 1949, the Communist party engaged in some "legal activity" within labor and political circles through front groups. The Philippine government's continuing attempt to suppress the Huk guerrillas resulted in open armed conflict by late 1949, with many prominent leftists and Communist party leaders then in Manila fleeing to the Huk forces. The Huk movement, changing its name to People's Liberation Forces (HMB), gained a considerable popular following in central Luzon, where war-time disruption

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of the economy combined with long-prevailing land tenure abuses were a source of peasant unrest. The notoriously fraudulent presidential elections of 1949 further contributed to popular disillusionment with democratic processes in the country.

The movement reached its zenith in 1950, spreading to areas of northern and southern Luzon and to the southern islands, particularly Panay. The HMB at that time included an estimated 12,000 to 13,000 armed followers and 30,000 to 40,000 sympathizers. During this period, the HMB evidently hoped to establish "liberated" areas in central Luzon from which they could eventually seize national power. Large-scale attacks were conducted, frequently close to the city of Manila. Government forces provided little effective opposition. Rampant corruption in the government, in the army and in the constabulary, and depressed economic conditions offered the rural populations of affected areas little alternative to the HMB. There was no evidence during this period of substantial outside assistance to the HMB.

During 1951, a rapid improvement in the government's position resulted from a combined military and psychological program carried out under Defense Secretary Ramon Magsaysay with US/MAAG advice and assistance. Reorganized army and constabulary units mounted aggressive counter-measures against the HMB and reform projects were initiated to gain public confidence and cooperation. By January 1953 the HMB movement had been reduced to about 3,000 to 5,000 armed followers and no longer posed a

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The HMB has been further weakened by continuing security actions, the surrender of several key guerrilla figures including Luis Taruc and Casto Alejandrino, and by the introduction of some economic and social reform measures. At the present time, the HMB, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] is estimated to have about 200-300 armed men and some 5,000 active sympathizers. Its strongholds are limited to Pampanga and Tarlac provinces in central Luzon, although sporadic activity attributed to the HMB occurs in some other areas of Luzon. The HMB presently has only minor nuisance capability. While there have been reports in recent months that the HMB is attempting to expand its guerrilla strength by recruitment, capitalizing on some economic deterioration in rural areas, there is no firm evidence of any significant growth.

Since 1953, the Communist movement in the Philippines has increasingly emphasized non-violent tactics, exploiting the growth of nationalism in labor, student and intellectual circles. There is some indication of an emerging Communist leadership within these circles, but no clear evidence as yet of close coordination with elements still active in the HMB movement. Captured party documents, and family and social ties, however, suggest the likelihood of at least some contact.

A chronology is attached.

- Mid-1942 - Following the arrest by the Japanese of several prominent Communist Party leaders in the Philippines other Communist leaders formed Hukbalabap guerrilla units to harass the Japanese on Luzon.
- March 1943 - Japanese attack on the main Huk headquarters led to a temporary policy of retreat into mountain strongholds and Huk base areas. A peasant front organization with semi-governmental functions was established in central Luzon.
- 1945 - Units of the Huks resist restoration of Philippine government authority.
- 1946-48 - Some Communist Party participation in labor and political front activity. Luis Taruc elected to Congress.
- March 1946 - The Hukbalabap and its National Peasants' Union outlawed by the Roxas government.
- 1948-1949 - Despite some amnesty negotiations, by 1949 armed conflict spread from main Huk bases in central Luzon to other areas of the island. Taruc and other Communist leaders joined Huk insurrection.
- January -
- October 1950 - Zenith of Huk strength in the Philippines, characterized by large-scale attacks in Luzon against little government opposition. The Hukbalabap assumed the title Hukbong Mapagpalayang Bayan, People's Liberation Army.
- October 1950 - Government Military Intelligence Service raid on Communist headquarters in Manila, capturing several top party leaders and documents was first major success in government's anti-HMB campaign.
- 1951 - Under the leadership of then Defense Secretary Maguaysay, the Philippine army, with MAAG training and assistance, was reorganized into smaller counter guerrilla units (the Battalion Combat Team being a basic unit) for aggressive actions against the Huks. This was combined with psychological warfare campaigns, including resettlement of surrendering guerrillas, with government assistance.
- Late 1951 - Mass surrenders of HMB on Luzon, virtual elimination of HMB movement on Panay.

- Late 1952** - Philippine Communist Party began to shift emphasis from "armed struggle" to non-violent tactics, with increasing emphasis on subversion, tighter discipline.
- 1953-54** - Sporadic negotiations toward surrender of HMB leaders and amnesty for the ranks carried out by the Quirino administration in 1953 and by the Magasaysay administration in 1954. A split began to occur in HMB leadership.
- May 1954** - Surrender of Luis Taruc, most popular HMB leader on Luzon.
- 1955-present** - Hukbs retain minor armed force, centered in Tarlac-Pampanga provinces, but lack capability for threatening the Philippine government.